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A 127
SERMON

Preach'd in the

CHAPPEL

AT

TUNBRIDGE-WELLS

UPON

Sunday the 19th of August, 1711.

Being a Day of Collection for
the Minister.

By the Right Reverend Father in God
CHARLES Lord Bishop of Norwich.
Trimnell.

*Printed at the Request of the Gentlemen who
heard it.*

L O N D O N :

Printed for D. Midwinter, at the Three Crowns in
St. Paul's Church-Yard. 1711.

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LONDON:

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Rom. xv. 13.

Now the God of Hope fill you with all Joy and Peace in believing, that ye may abound in Hope thro' the Power of the Holy Ghost.

THE Apostle having observed the Disputes that arose between the Jewish and Gentile Converts, about the Measures of Christian Liberty and the Restraints of the Law, with the Mischiefs that sprang from those Disputations; sets himself in the Chapter before, and in the Beginning of this, to shew both one and the other how they ought to behave themselves under these Differences of Opinion.

They who were fully satisfied of their being free from the Obligation of the Law, were neither to despise those that thought it continued, nor to use their own Liberty so as to put the others under a Temptation to sin; and they who thought themselves obliged to regard several Rules that were now superseded, were not to look on others as prophane that did not observe the same Rites with themselves: but they were all to bear with and consider one another, and every

every one was to please his Neighbour for his Good, to Edification, y. 2.

And when the Apostle had shewn the Reasonableness of such a mild and compassionate Conduct, he prays in the 5th Verse of this Chapter that the God of Patience and Consolation would grant them to be like minded one towards another according to Christ Jesus, that they might with one Mind and one Mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

From this Prayer he falls into the Argument of Unity again, and urges that Jesus Christ was the Minister of Circumcision for the Truth of God, to confirm the Promises made unto the Fathers, and that the Gentiles might glorify God for his Mercy, v. 8, 9. intending thereby to shew that Circumcision, which was laid as the Foundation of their being hereafter to be one Body, ought not to be an Occasion of Division among them: and then he renews his Prayer in the Words of the Text,

Now the God of Hope fill you with all Joy and Peace in believing, that ye may abound in Hope thro' the Power of the Holy Ghost. From these Words I shall endeavour to shew,

I. That there is no Joy nor Peace for a Man but in believing the Gospel of Christ.

II. That Faith in Christ, as it gives us Joy and Peace in our selves, so it ought to give us Joy and Peace with one another.

III. That

III. That unless it does so we shall never abound in Hope.

IV. That whenever it does give us this Joy and Peace in our selves, and with one another, it is by the Power of the Holy Ghost.

I. *That there is no Joy nor Peace for a Man but in believing the Gospel of Christ*: For no Man who has not extinguished all Conscience and Sense, can be easy and pleased with himself, but in some good Measure of Assurance of the End of his Hopes, the Salvation of his Soul: and there is no other Name but that of Christ given unto Men whereby they may be saved. All Flesh had corrupted themselves, as the Apostle in this Epistle has proved, and were fallen short of the Glory of God, and *Jew and Gentile were all under Sin*. Both of them had Law enough to convict them of many Transgressions; but neither of them had sufficient Ground whereon to promise themselves Forgiveness and the Favour of God.

And these are things of that Weight and Importance to every Man's Quiet and Ease, that as the World has ever been solicitous about them, so none can pretend to be indifferent whether they have a just Expectation of them or no.

Evil Practices ever did and ever will give so much Uneasiness to those who suffer themselves

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to make any Reflection, and will fill their Minds with such quick Apprehensions of that Punishment which they justly deserve; that they can have no Peace till those Fears are justly abated by a well grounded Hope of Pardon thro' the Mercy of God.

But there is no other Way of being thus justified freely by his Grace, which is the Apostle's Manner of expressing our Pardon, than thro' the Redemption that is in Jesus Christ, whom God hath set forth to be a Propitiation thro' Faith in his Blood, to declare his Righteousness for the Remission of Sins that are past thro' the Forbearance of God. Rom. iii. 24, 25. And this Righteousness of God, which is by Faith of Jesus Christ, is unto all and upon all them that believe, and upon no Body else. So that they who are without this Faith are still in their Sins: they neither are nor can be free either from the Dominion of them, or from those Terrors to which their Sins do most justly subject them.

But when we are led not only to the Sight but the Abhorrence of our Sins, from the Consideration of what God did in Christ to deliver us from them, and from all the Consequences of them, and are thereby moved to repent, and believe on him who thus came to redeem us; our Dread of the Divine Indignation goes off by Degrees, as our Faith and our Obedience increase, and we soon grow to have a good Hope toward God. *This Hope we have as an Anchor of the Soul both sure and steadfast*, Heb. vi. 19. and it keeps

us from being dangerously tossed by the Waves and Storms of a wicked and a troublesome World:

Under this comfortable Assurance that God is for us, we are apt to cry out with the Apostle; *Who can be against us? Who shall lay any thing to the Charge of God's Elect? It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died; yea rather that is risen again, who is even at the right Hand of God, who also maketh Intercession for us.* Rom. viii. 31, &c.

This Consideration cannot choose but fill us with Joy and Peace in believing; and as it gives us this in our selves, so, as I am next to shew,

II. *It ought to give us Joy and Peace with one another.* And indeed this is the Joy and Peace which the Apostle does more immediately pray in this Place that the Believers at Rome might be filled with. It must be built, it is true, upon that Joy and Peace which every Christian is supposed to have in himself; which was the Reason of my speaking in the first Place of that: But no Christian should be contented barely to enjoy the Quiet of his own Mind; nor can he very fully enjoy it, if he does not endeavour as much as he can that Christianity may have this Effect upon all that profess it, and in some Measure also succeed in so good a Design.

Christianity was certainly as much intended to secure and promote our mutual Joy as every Man's particular Peace: And if we consider how many of those Duties, on the Discharge of which

our own Joy doth depend, have respect to our Brethren ; we shall find our own and their Satisfaction very closely interwoven, and in a manner inseparable, and be easy our selves in Proportion to the Peace and Joy we diffuse among others.

There is nothing so much insisted upon in the whole Scheme of the Christian Religion as the Love of our Brethren. It is made the distinguishing Character of a Disciple of Christ, and is put almost for the whole Evangelical Law: As he who hateth his Brother is not allowed to have any knowledge of God, so he that dwelleth in Love is for that Reason looked upon as dwelling in God ; *who hath so loved us, that we also should love one another.*

The Peace God offers to us in the Forgiveness of our Sins upon our Repentance, ought to engage us to offer the same to those that have offended us when they also repent. And as Men are commonly most troublesome to others when they are disturbed in their own Minds ; so that Quiet they feel in the Hopes of the Pardon of their Sins not only obliges, but also disposes them to make other People easy, and to leave them at Rest.

If we consider that all *the Wars and Fightings among us come from our Lusts, that War in our Members*, we must needs be sensible that that Faith which puts us upon the subduing our Lusts, and helps us to conquer them ; does both require us to live peaceably with all Men, and also make it much easier for us to do it.

And

And tho' a great deal of Contention and Frowardness has all along happened between the Professors of the Christian Faith, to the great Reproach of the Christian Name, yet this was neither the Design of the Gospel nor the natural Consequence of it, but merely the Effect of Passions which it had not sufficiently subdued, even where it was the most warmly professed.

Had the Jewish Converts treated those who from among the Gentiles were turned unto Christ ; and on the other Hand, had the Gentile Profelytes used the Jews, with that Meekness and Gentleness with which our Saviour treated them both ; had the one but duly considered the Education of the other under the Strictness of the Mosaical Law, and the other again made just Allowances to the Gentiles for their never having been under that Yoke ; they had met one another in Love in the joynt embracing of the Christian Religion : which took all that was immutably good in both their former Professions, and stood clear of the Faults and Defects of them both ; and neither of them had either taken any undue Liberties, or imposed any needless Restraints.

But these new Believers of different Extraction, bringing each their particular Prejudices with them into the Institution of Christ, and neither of them enough considering that the Design of this Institution was more to correct their Passions, and give them humble, and meek, and heavenly Minds than any Form or Scheme of

Religious Rites; did grieve and provoke one another, to the great Hindrance of their common Profession, and to the Loss of those Comforts and Advantages which they might have received.

To secure these Comforts in any State of the Christian Church, it is necessary that *the Strong should*, as the Apostle exhorts, *bear the Infirmities of the Weak*, and not think only of pleasing themselves; on the other Hand, that the Weak should not take upon them to judge the Conduct of the Strong; but that *every one* should first endeavour *to be fully satisfied in his own Mind*, and then study *to please his Neighbour for his Good to Edification*.

We are not to please him by soothing him up in his Errors, or flattering his Passions; but by a wise and gentle treating of his Weakness to help his Infirmities, and bring him into the number of the Strong. We must not pretend to sacrifice Truth and Order to the Promotion of Peace, because they are the best if not the only Means of preserving it: but we must use all Justice and Prudence in establishing of Order, and promote its being observed in the Meekness of Wisdom. We ought never to believe a Lie, nor profess that which we conceive to be so, much less impose it on others: but every Truth is not of that mighty Importance, that we must contend for it with Earnestness, and to the apparent Hazard of publick Disturbance.

It is neither necessary nor easy to say in what Particulars this Christian Forbearance is to be exercised: It is like many other Christian Duties which are plain enough in the general, but in the several Instances of them are subject to Christian Discretion. And if Men endeavour to possess their Minds with a strong Sense of the Importance of these Duties, they will not be much at a Loss for the Practice of them upon suitable Occasions.

It was not a trivial Matter that divided the Jewish and Gentile Converts at *Rome*; and we cannot but say it was natural for serious Jews, who were of less Understanding, to be fearful how they gave up so great a Part of the Mosaical Law, upon following of Christ who came to fulfill it: For the Extent of the Liberty wrought by the Christian Religion, appeared by degrees; and it could hardly be expected that all should come clearly into it at first. And on the other Hand, the Gentiles who had not yet been under that Yoke, had no Reason to take it upon them, when they could not find it was any Part of that burden which Christ laid upon his Disciples. Nor do we find that either the Jew or Gentile in this Case was blamed for his particular Perswasion; but for not enough considering each others Case, and the true Spirit of the Christian Religion; which ought to have made them treat one another as Brethren, till the way of God should be more perfectly known to both of them.

I do not pretend to draw a Parallel between those early and our later Divisions, which differ in many Particulars: but not so much as to make those general Directions which the Apostle then gave, of less use for our Conduct and Government now. The Design of the Christian Religion is always the same; not busied about *Meats and Drinks*, or any thing of so indifferent a Nature, but about *Righteousness and Peace, and Joy in the Holy Ghost*; and we must needs be always obliged to follow after the things which make for Peace, and things wherewith one may edify another. It will ever be Dangerous to despise those whom for ought we know God may receive; and it will never be safe to *judge another Man's Servant*, or indeed almost any thing *before the time, until the Lord come who will bring to light the hidden things of Darkness, and then shall every Man have praise of God.*

We must do what we can in the way which Christ and his Apostles took to bring Men out of Error, and to lead them into all Truth: but we must after all be careful how we pronounce about the Consequences of many Mistakes which Men build upon the Foundation. I much question whether any thing has more contributed to the fatal Miscarriages of Christians, than that Freedom they have taken to exclude one another from the Hopes of Salvation; as it cannot but lessen the Hopes of all, who are not bold enough to thrust themselves into the number of the Elect,

Elect, to think that but few can be saved. For as we are next to Consider.

III. *Unless our Faith in Christ give us Joy and Peace with one another, we shall never abound in Hope.* We can never think Christianity takes great place in the World till it has this Effect; and so all the Promises of it will in proportion have so much the fainter Influence upon us. There is no Evidence of the Truth of the Gospel like seeing and feeling the Power of it; and while we want that, we cannot be very stedfast in believing. The Envyings and Strifes that are not only not quieted by it, but too often take Occasion from it, fill our Minds with a thousand Perplexities, and are perpetually tossing them between vain Presumptions and groundless Mistrusts; but never make them strong in Faith, or joyful thro' Hope.

These Contentions by the Perverseness of Men are sometimes unavoidable, but they are always uneasy to well disposed and serious People, who never have any Comfort in them but from the Reflection of having behaved themselves under them with that Meekness and Patience which the Temper of the Gospel requires.

For they know that in Jesus Christ, neither Circumcision availeth any thing nor Uncircumcision, but a new Creature, and that Faith which worketh by Love; that ^{every} where envying and strife is, there is Confusion and ^{every} evil Work; that while these Strifes and Divisions are among us we are carnal and
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walk as Men, not like those who profess to be the Disciples of Christ, or are led by his Spirit. For the Fruit of the Spirit is Love, Joy, Peace, Long-suffering, Gentleness, Goodness, Faith, Meekness, Temperance; against such there is no Law, no pretence of saying any thing against the Practice of these: If these be in us and abound, they make us that we shall not be barren or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ; but he that lacketh these things is blind and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old Sins.

They that have these things can hardly enjoy the Comfort of them, thro' the Frowardness of those that want them; and it often staggers the good Christian's Hope to think how little Charity there is in the World. We were told indeed before Hand, that when it came to pass we might believe, that there would be Heresies in the World, and great Contentions about the Christian Religion: and that sad Event is really a Confirmation of the Gospel. But still at the time that such Contentions happen, they are great Lesseners both of the Faith and Hope of Persons that are concerned in them, or Observers of them; and for want of due Consideration, which these strivings very rarely allow, the things that should be for our Strength are often an Occasion of falling.

I shall not here go about to enumerate all the Mischeifs that have befallen the Church from the Divisions of Christians; they are too many and

too obvious to be insisted upon. It is evident enough how the little Hope that Christians generally care to express of the Salvation of those of different Communion from themselves, does naturally tend to weaken the Faith and lessen the Hope of them all: And it is as easy to see what another Life would be put into the Christian Religion, and what another Spirit would move in the World, if Christians were either more united in their common Profession, or loved one another more where they could not perfectly agree in the same Mind and in the same Judgment.

And did all who profess to believe the Gospel of Christ lay these two Considerations to Heart, they would follow after things that make for Peace, and things whereby one might edify another. The Church of *Rome* would not make so much Contention necessary by new and absurd Impositions, and condemn and persecute all that did not comply; nor they who separate themselves from the antient Government of the Church without such Necessity, any longer stand out against the mildest and most apostolical Order of Christian Communion that is in the World, to the great hindrance of the Progress of that Reformation that in all probability would otherwise be made in it: But all of us should contend for that Faith, and that only which was once delivered to the Saints; and we should so contend for it, as to keep the Unity of Spirit in the Bond of Peace.

This would be the Effect of being truly concerned for the happy State of the Christian Church: but it is a Work of that Difficulty, and requires so great a Mortification of those Passions which are too common to Man, that we cannot hope to see so glorious a Change without the especial Assistance of God; as we are next to consider,

IV. *That whenever the Christian Faith gives us this Joy and Peace in our selves and with one another, it is by the Power of the Holy Ghost. For no Man can so much as say that Jesus is the Christ but by the Holy Ghost; i. e. no Man can be prevailed upon to quit his former Errors, and forsake his old Sins, and to give up himself to be a Disciple and Servant of Christ, who is not both convinced in his Judgment of the Truth of Christ's Doctrine by those Miracles which were wrought by the Spirit in Confirmation of it; and who is not also disposed by the same Spirit affectionately to embrace what he sees so much Reason to look on as true.*

And if we cannot believe without the immediate Help of this Spirit, it is most certain that we cannot without it be *filled with all Joy and Peace in believing*; we cannot assure our selves of the Pardon and Favour of God, which is so necessary to our Peace, unless he *send forth the Spirit of his Son into our Hearts, whereby alone it is that we have Confidence to cry Abba Father.* It is this Spirit alone that is able to work
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that Alteration which is required in ours; and till it has done so, it will not *bear Witness with our Spirit that we are the Children of God.*

And as we cannot without this special Grace of God secure the Peace of our own Minds, so neither can we maintain it long with one another. We have Need to be always on our Guard, and yet cannot be so unless a superior Power watches over us, such a one as neither slumbers nor sleeps: for otherwise the Adversary will sow the Seeds of Division among us, and the Corruption of our Natures will forward the Growth of such kind of Productions. Men's Passions will mix with their religious Opinions, and call themselves Zeal: and others observing the Heat which Men shew in lesser things, will be sometimes tempted to be cold and careless about the greatest of all.

It is that Spirit alone which descended upon the Apostles to lead them into all Truth, that can give us a right Judgment in all things, and enable us to promote what yet remains unaccomplished of that glorious Prophecy of the Prophet *Isaiah. The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the Spirit of Wisdom and Understanding, the Spirit of Counsel and Might, the Spirit of Knowledge and of the Fear of the Lord; and shall make him of quick Understanding in the Fear of the Lord. And he shall not judge after the Sight of his Eyes, nor reprove after the Hearing of his Ears, but with Righteousness shall he judge the Poor, and reprove with Equity for the Meek of*

the Earth. The Wolf also shall dwell with the Lamb, and the Leopard shall lye down with the Kid: and the Calf, and the young Lion, and the Fatling together, and a little Child lead them. And the sucking Child shall play on the hole of the Asp, and the weaned Child shall put his Hand on the Cockatrice Den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy Mountain; for the Earth shall be full of the Knowledge of the Lord, as the Waters cover the Sea. If. II.

How near a Step is made toward the full Accomplishment of this comfortable Prophecy, by the many great Advantages which it has pleased God to give us against the Enemies of Truth and Peace; he only can tell who has hitherto been so gracious to us: but the late Success abroad so seasonably added to those we have formerly had, ought to give us a good Hope toward God; and oblige us to do all we can to fit our selves for the Blessings of a safe and enduring Peace.

The thus fitting our selves is more indeed than can be expected from such Creatures as we are without further Assistance: and yet we also must set our Hands to it. It is not so by the Power of the Holy Ghost, as not to require also our utmost Care and Endeavours: We must hear and read, and consider and pray, and meditate upon the Providence of God, that we may believe and fix our Dependance on him. And we must, as *St. Chrysostom* speaks upon the Words of the Text, be Workers together with God to this excellent End, and not expect it should be brought about without our Concurrence. We must re-
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move all Obstacles out of the way of our Faith and Hope : and if it be possible, and as much as lieth in us, we must live peaceably with all Men.

What then remains but that in an humble Sense of our Weakness and Insufficiency for these things, which are of such Consequence to us, we earnestly recommend our selves and others to the Grace and Assistance of God, and beseech him to give us *not the Spirit of fear but of power and love, and of a sound Mind* : intreating him *not to suffer in any of us an evil Heart of Unbelief*, but to take from us all Ignorance, Hardness of Heart and Contempt of his Word ; that it may dwell richly in us in all Wisdom and spiritual Understanding, and bring forth the Fruits of Righteousness, which are sown in Peace of them that make Peace.

Let us then *consider one another to provoke unto Love and good Works* ; and endeavour to make Peace wherever we can, as the greatest Kindness we can do our selves, and the greatest Service we can do to the World. We may make some little Judgment of the Pleasure that would spring up to us from such common Endeavours, by that degree of it we feel in studying only to oblige one another at this place of Refreshment and Ease : where a Respite from *Strife* as well as from *Business* sweetens our Tempers and quiets our Minds.

And if so small a Truce as this has such great and agreeable Effects, what can we think would our Joy and Satisfaction be, were our Divisions
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not only closed for a while but perfectly healed by a National, Firm, and Christian Peace?

However let us improve even these transitory Occasions of promoting mutual Affection as much as we can, that we may return to our several Stations and Callings with all the good Nature that our friendly and religious Meeting here can possibly inspire.

And let that Person under whose kind and constant and peaceable Ministry we are here daily assembled for the joynt Worship of our common Master and Lord, find the Benefit of that good Disposition which he helps to raise in us, by receiving some of the Fruits of our Love.

Our Gratitude to God, and to those whom he uses as Instruments to draw us nearer himself, cannot fail of strongly inclining us to this: and it must needs add to this just Inclination, to think that we do at the same time provide for the spiritual Wants of them whom we are to leave behind in this Place, and who now by their Labour and Care supply those Conveniences of Life and Means of Health which we at present Enjoy. *A Faith that worketh by Love,* the only Faith that recommends us to God, will I am confident shew it self in this benevolent Manner, and justify the Claim we all have to the being accounted the Disciples of Christ.

And therefore I pray *that our God would count you worthy of this Calling, and fulfill all the good Pleasure of his Goodness, and the work of Faith with Power: That the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ*

Christ may be glorified in you, and ye in him, according to the Grace of God and our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now the God of Patience and Consolation grant you to be like minded one towards another according to Christ Jesus, that ye may with one Mind and one Mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; the Father of Mercies and the God of all Comfort, who comforteth us in all our Tribulation, that we may be able to Comfort them who are in any Trouble, by the comfort with which we our selves are comforted of God. To whom be Glory in the Church throughout all Ages World without End. Amen.

F I N I S.

Christ was crucified in our stead, and died for our sins, according to the Grace of God and our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now the God of Father and Comforter grant us to be his faithful and obedient children, that we may not only be saved by his Grace, but also be able to comfort others in all their afflictions. The Father of all Comfort, who comforteth his own people, that we may be able to comfort others who are in any affliction, by the Comfort which we have received of God. To whom be Glory in the Church throughout all the World without end. Amen.